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Approved For Release 2006/03/17 : CIA-RDP79T00865A000800240001-8

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PLO Seeks Observer Status at UNESCO

The Palestine Liberation Organization is seeking permanent observer status at the Paris-based UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as a means of further expanding its international representation and acceptability. The PLO and its supporters are lobbying for support to raise the issue directly at the May meeting of the organization's Executive Board. A direct request by the PLO last March for such status was refused by UNESCO's Director General, but he has no legal authority to prevent Board action on the request.

The question of the PLO's status can be added as a new item to the meeting's agenda by a simple majority vote. Beyond that point, however, the Executive Board's authority to grant such status--without the approval of UNESCO's General Conference--is unclear. UNESCO has formerly permitted only non-member states--such as the Holy See--and intergovernmental organizations to appoint permanent observer delegates; no national liberation movement has ever applied for such standing.

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Norwegian Labor Party Names Party Leadership

Norwegian Prime Minister Bratteli will step down as prime minister and as chairman of the ruling Labor Party before the next general election scheduled for 1977.

The announcements were made on April 24 at the Labor Party convention. The party named Odvar Nordli, the current leader of the party's parliamentary group, to succeed Bratteli as prime minister "when the time comes" and called on Reiulf Steen, the current Labor Party deputy chairman, to take over as party chairman.

Bratteli announced last June that he would step down as party chairman at this year's party convention, but his decision to retire as prime minister was a surprise. Bratteli's health, which had deteriorated steadily since his wartime concentration camp experiences, was undoubtedly the basis of his decision.

The party had been planning for some time to split the jobs of party chairman and prime minister. Competition between Steen and Nordli for the chairmanship had intensified since Bratteli's decision to relinquish the job. The assurance to Nordli that he will succeed Bratteli as prime minister was a compromise between the Steen and Nordli camps within the party.

The timing of Bratteli's announcement suggests that his retirement will come soon. Nordli's hand will be strengthened if he assumes the position well before the election in 1977.

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West German Terrorists Demand the Release of
the Baader-Meinhof Gang

The terrorist assault on the West German Embassy in Stockholm today comes at a time when Chancellor Schmidt's Social Democrats are preparing for two important state elections in which the opposition Christian Democrats are certain to try to capitalize on the law-and-order issue.

In today's shoot-out and occupation of the embassy, members of a West German terrorist organization seized the ambassador and ten others as hostages and demanded the release of several terrorist leaders who are scheduled to go on trial in Stuttgart on May 21.

West German officials have anticipated an attempt to free the imprisoned anarchist leaders--Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof--following several incidents in West Berlin in which a leading Christian Democratic politician was kidnaped and a prominent jurist murdered. The Schmidt government was able to secure the release of the politician but only after it agreed to release five associates of Baader and Meinhof. The tightening of security in most West German cities evidently prompted the terrorist group to choose a target outside the Federal Republic.

These sporadic acts of terrorism have troubled the Schmidt government which is aware of its vulnerability on this issue. In the West Berlin elections last month, the Social Democrats probably lost about one to two percent of the vote as a result of the kidnaping incident.

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This was not sufficient to deprive the Social Democrats of their dominant position in West Berlin but a similar shift in the May 4 elections in Saarland and North Rhine-Westphalia would be crucial because recent polls indicate close contests in both of these states.

A setback in North Rhine-Westphalia for the Social Democrats and their national coalition partners, the Free Democrats, would be a bad omen for the 1976 national elections because this heavily industrialized state accounts for about 30 percent of the West German electorate.

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"Cheese War" Cools Down

A running dispute between the US and the EC was settled this week when the EC Commission agreed to suspend the subsidies it pays to producers of certain cheeses exported to the US. EC Commission Vice President Soames said the community decided on the suspension in order to avoid the imposition of countervailing duties by the US.

In a letter to Ambassador Greenwald, Soames said that the EC did not agree with the US contention that countervailing duties were justified because of the damage to the US dairy industry caused by the subsidies. He claimed that the EC nevertheless acted in order to avoid a "confrontation in trade relations between the community and the US in the present world circumstances." Soames said privately that the commission had great difficulty reaching this decision and he hinted that the US might "wish to apply a balm for bad feelings."

Several other commissioners also told Ambassador Greenwald the cheese subsidy problem had raised strong divisive feelings and that further US-EC disputes over countervailing duties should be avoided. The EC officials said that there would be "no chance" of getting a commission majority for a decision of this kind again.

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Portuguese Election

The Portuguese government has pledged to respond quickly and forcefully to any attempt to disrupt the constituent assembly election tomorrow.

The left-wing fringe parties have made clear their distaste for this exercise in "bourgeois democracy" and may try to cause trouble at the polls. The Reorganizing Movement of the Proletariat Party (MRPP), earlier banned from participation in the election, has called for street demonstrations. The MRPP might be joined by other extreme leftist groups who have termed the elections a farce and called on workers "to take up arms and overthrow the government" on May Day.

General Otelo Carvalho, deputy commander of Portugal's internal security force, has warned of possible violence and declared that he will use force if necessary to prevent interference in the election process.

In a speech to the nation yesterday, President Costa Gomes called on the Portuguese people to reject those who preach violence and to choose "among the authentic parties which do not bar the socialist road and promise a multi-party democracy." Other Movement spokesmen, less enamored of the election process, have stepped up their campaign to persuade "undecided" voters to cast blank ballots.

Public opinion polls showed that even late in the campaign an extremely large percentage of the electorate had not yet made up its

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mind. Should a significant proportion of the ballots be blank the Armed Forces Movement might seek to portray them as votes for the Movement or, more likely, as demonstrating that Portugal is not yet ready for democracy.

Portugal's central labor confederation, Intersindical, has joined the Movement's effort to persuade voters to cast blank ballots, as have a few of the smaller socialist groups. The Communist Party, which dominates Intersindical, has not publicly endorsed the campaign even though such a move would have helped the party solidify its ties with the Movement and would have served to obscure its expected poor showing at the polls. The failure of the Communists' to adopt this strategy could indicate that they are expecting to do much better at the polls than has been forecast.

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